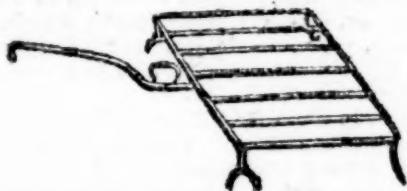


COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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“ Have not *I*, then, a clear and indisputable right to blame you and your colleagues for whatever calamities the nation has now to endure? For sixteen, nay, for twenty years, have you not been warned by me of all the dangers that you have brought upon the country? Have you, then, *any excuse to plead?* — LETTER TO STERN-PATH MAN, *Register*, 11th May, 1822.

TO THE READERS OF THE REGISTER.

*On the Prospect which we have now
before us.*

Kensington, 16th February, 1830.

MY FRIENDS,

I HAVE prepared a petition to be presented to the House of Commons, containing, in the first place, a recital of the several instances in which it has been *warned by me* of the dangers to which its measures would expose the country; and in the next place, giving it one more warning with regard to the future. I here insert this petition for your perusal, and that you may have it to refer to as events shall come on. I have always, for many years past, taken care to have my predictions recorded, and that, too, in the papers of some sort or another belonging to the House itself. I have adhered to this course in the present instance: whoever lives a few years, will see the predictions verified; which predictions I have now, in this very petition, conveyed to this most honourable and most wonderful House, which sits under a law made to protect it against the contempt of the people, to govern whom it is daily making laws. When I have inserted the petition, I

shall have a good deal to say to you upon the subjects of it.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in parliament assembled.

The petition of William Cobbett (farmer of the parish of Barnes, in the county of Surrey), being dated this 15th day of February, 1830,

Most humbly sheweth,

That your petitioner perceives, with great alarm, that there are persons who appear to be combining for the purpose of inducing your honourable House to pass laws to cause the King's coin to be again supplanted by a fictitious currency, consisting of worthless rags; a measure which, if adopted, would deprive the people of that protection which they derive from the most important of all the prerogatives of the Crown, and would, in the firm conviction of your petitioner, finally and even speedily expose the nation to the horrors naturally resulting from an extinction of all measure of value.

That your petitioner, in order to induce your honourable House not totally to disregard this his opinion, begs to be permitted to state the following facts to your honourable House; that is to say,

1. That, in the year 1817, your petitioner, together with some thousands of the people of Hampshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire, and other counties, sent to your honourable House a petition, humbly praying, that you would be pleased to reduce the interest of the Debt, and all public salaries and pay, in proportion to the then-augmented value of money; that you would be pleased to reduce the standing army; that you would be pleased to reduce all the taxes, and to abolish the taxes on malt, hops, leather, soap, and candles; and that we the said petitioners, most humbly and respectfully besought your honourable House to believe, that, unless measures of this description were adopted in time, the final consequence must be distress so

- general and so great as to expose the whole frame of society to dissolution.
2. That your honourable House was pleased to give to these humble representations and prayers, no answer other than that which the petitioners found in a law, which your honourable House hastily passed, to enable the King's Ministers to shut them up in prisons and in dungeons without being confronted with their accusers, without crime specified in the commitment, and without the power of appeal to the Act of Habeas Corpus; and that in consequence of this law, many of the petitioners were thus imprisoned, cut off from all communication with wives, children, and friends, and deprived of the use of pen, ink, and paper; that some of these petitioners died in prison; that the rest, after long suffering, were sent forth from the dungeons, without any trial, without any hearing, without any knowledge of the offences imputed to them, totally ruined in their affairs, some finding that their wives and children had perished for want, and all cut off from the possibility of obtaining redress, your honourable House having in the meanwhile, passed a Bill of Indemnity bearing harmless all those, of whatever rank or degree, who had, in their treatment of those unhappy men, gone even beyond the severity of the imprisonment law itself.
 3. That, in the year 1818, your humble petitioner having fled to Long Island, in order to avoid the dungeons and the treatment aforementioned, and having heard of an intention on the part of your Honourable House to cause a return to the ancient measure of value, lost not a moment in praying your honourable House not to cause such return, without, at the same time, passing a law making an equitable adjustment with regard to the interest of the Debt, with regard to all contracts between man and man, and without a reduction of the taxes to, at least, one half of their then nominal amount, humbly beseeching your honourable House to be assured, that, if your honourable House caused a return to the ancient measure of value without adopting these concomitant measures, you would, in effect, more than double the amount of the taxes, cause a violation of all contracts, fatten the usurers at the expense of the industrious classes, and would plunge the country into confusion and misery indescribable.
 4. That, in the year 1819, your honourable House, totally disregarding this solemn warning of your humble petitioner, though he had enforced it with arguments wholly unanswerable, actually passed a law for re-establishing the ancient measure of value, and that, too, without any of those concomitant measures so earnestly prayed for by your humble petitioner.
 5. That, in the year 1822, that distress, the

coming of which had been so clearly and so confidently predicted by your humble petitioner, was spreading itself over the country with such fearful strides, that your honourable House repealed, in effect, the most material part of the law of 1819, leaving, however, other parts, which, in time, your humble petitioner knew must, if left without remedy, tend to produce a convulsive revolution.

6. That, in the year 1823, your humble petitioner, together with a great majority of his brother freeholders of the county of Norfolk, sent to your honourable house a petition, praying you, while yet there was time, to pass laws for the making of an equitable adjustment of all contracts, not excepting the contracts with those who were receiving interest on account of the Debt; praying you to abolish all unnecessary expenses; praying you to abolish the taxes on malt, hops, leather, soap, and candles; praying you to apply certain portions of public property to public purposes; praying you to restore the people to the enjoyment of their right of freely choosing their representatives in Parliament; and imploring your honourable House to believe, that, without these measures, there would be great danger arise to that constitution which had, in former times, been a source of so much greatness and happiness to England.
7. That your honourable House, while you received, and caused to be printed this our humble petition, did not condescend to pay the smallest attention to its earnest prayers and its solemn warnings, though these were speedily followed by similar prayers and warnings, expressed in petitions from the counties of Cambridge, Hereford, and Surrey.
8. That in the year 1826, the consequence of this inattention made its hideous appearance in a panic, which, according to the confession of one of the King's Ministers, had, at one time, brought the country to "*within forty eight hours of barter*"; that in this state of alarm, your honourable House passed a bill to abolish all notes under five pounds on the 5th of April, 1829; that while the bill was on the table of your honourable House, and before it was passed, your humble petitioner sent to your honourable House a petition, praying you to pass the bill, but not without reducing the taxes to the amount at which they stood before the small paper money supplanted the coin of his Majesty, solemnly warning your honourable House, that if the said bill were passed and enforced, without such reduction, it would produce throughout the kingdom ruin and wretchedness absolutely insupportable; that your honourable House, not condescending even after all that had passed, to listen to this humble supplication and solemn warning of your petitioner, passed and have

enforced, the said bill, and that the unhappy people are now smarting and writhing under the consequences.

That your humble petitioner, begs to be permitted to express a hope, that your honourable house will not, after the recital of this series of facts, at once so striking and so notorious, deem it an affront offered to the wisdom of your honourable House, if he entertain an expectation, that you will now at last condescend to lend an ear to his humble representations and prayers with regard to the present and the future.

That it is his decided conviction, that, if your honourable House shall unhappily entertain, or give countenance to, any measure for again debasing the currency, without, at the same time, closing the bank against demands for gold, and making the paper a legal tender, there will be a general run on all the banks; that another panic will ensue; that the gold will be buried; that there will be no measure of value; and that all law and all the rights of property will yield to the ungovernable ravings of hunger and to the unbridled indulgence of the dreadful passion of revenge.

That, if your honourable House adopt the said measure of debasement, and at the same time close the banks against demands for gold, and that if you do this in a manner so sudden as to prevent the run above-mentioned, your humble petitioner beseeches your honourable House to reflect on the awful consequences of *two distinct prices* in all dealings, one price in paper, and another price in money; an event which has always taken place under similar circumstances; an event clearly inevitable in the case contemplated; an event that has always proved, and that always must prove, the *death of paper-money*; an event that has never failed to be attended with the total destruction of every thing called credit; an event that must, your humble petitioner is convinced, produce in this country, a convulsive, if not a sanguinary, revolution.

That, however, your humble peti-

tioner fears, as he thinks that all men must fear, that if the King's coin continue to be the measure of value, without a reduction of the taxes to the amount at which they stood previous to the issue of the small paper-money, civil society will be shaken to its very base; that already, even though the law of 1826 has not yet produced one tenth part of its inevitable effects, all property begins to feel its insecurity; that the manufacturer, the merchant, and the trader, whether wholesale or retail, are carrying on business without profit, and living on their capital, or on the capital of their creditors; that the landlord finds even the rigid law of distraint insufficient for the obtaining of his rent; that the farmer finds his stock and all his means melt imperceptibly away, while the increasing wants of the unemployed labourer augments the demands on those diminished means; and that, while all these classes are suffering the extreme of both bodily and mental anguish, they behold the receivers of the more than doubled taxes, wallowing in luxurious waste, and glittering in insulting splendour.

That your humble petitioner hopes that your honourable House will not interpret into any want of respect towards your honourable House an expression of his earnest hope, that you will be pleased while there is yet time, seriously to reflect on the catastrophe to which this state of things naturally tends; that, even at this moment, hundreds of thousands of the manufacturing labourers obtain their miserable pittance in great part from the voluntary contributions of those amongst the next class whose means are not yet exhausted, the law having long since failed to enforce a collection of rates sufficient for the purpose, and that, in the manufacturing districts, to the dolings of charity on the one hand and the menace of military force on the other, is to be ascribed the keeping of the peace amongst a people the most industrious and the most expert and ingenious in the whole world.

That, in the agricultural part of the kingdom, that is to say, in nineteen

twentieths of it, the prospect is infinitely more full of peril; that the people of England have a clear right, in law as well as in reason, to food, raiment, and fuel, out of the produce or proceeds of the land of England; that if they cannot obtain these out of their own means, or by their labour, they have a right to them in the shape of parochial relief; that they know their rights in this respect; that already they have in divers instances, shown a determination not to lie down and groan out their souls under the unspeakable pangs of hunger; that already they have in several instances, enforced their demands of relief with cudgels in their hands; that, in every case they have been tranquillised by a yielding to their demands; and that your humble petitioner beseeches your honourable House to reflect, while there is time for reflection, on the swiftness of the spreading of this species of contagion, and to put to yourselves the solemn question of, *what could be done if half a county here and half a county there were in a state of commotion, arising from hunger, and urged on by all the hostile passions known to the breast of man?*

That such is a possible and even a probable event, your humble petitioner believes that no man will deny; that, if such an event were to take place, it is manifest that there would be an instant and universal run on the banks for gold, and that general bankruptcy, adding to the turmoil, would hasten the moment when the word *property* would be without a meaning; and your humble petitioner beseeches your honourable House to reflect, that, in such a state of things, the choice would lie between universal violence and bloodshed, and a transfer of all rented property from the owner to the occupier, and thus, as the least evil of the two, making the rich and the poor change places.

That your humble petitioner cannot trust himself to venture on a description of the scenes which the metropolis would present in case of any of the events above contemplated; that barely to hint at these will, your petitioner humbly hopes, be sufficient to induce

your honourable House to lose no time in adopting effectual measures of present relief, and of security for the future; and that, therefore, in this hope, he humbly prays, that your honourable House will, with all possible speed, pass a bill, or bills, having the effect following; to wit,

1. To reduce the amount of the taxes to the amount at which they stood in the year 1791.
2. To take from the revenues of the Church, from the Crown lands, and from mismanaged corporations and public charities, whatever sum may be wanted annually beyond the amount of the taxes of 1791.
3. To make a just reduction of the interest of the debt, commonly called National.
4. To make a radical reform in your honourable House, so that the members of that House may be freely chosen by the people at large.

That it has been with extreme reluctance, that your humble petitioner has thus ventured to trespass on the time of your honourable House; but that, being fully convinced of the existence of the dangers of which he has spoken; being little short of certain, that, unless prevented by the measures which he has suggested, the catastrophe will be even more dreadful than that which he has attempted to describe; being thus convinced, he thought it a duty due from him to his country, to add the present to all the past warnings given by him to your honourable House, whom he, in conclusion, once more earnestly implores to save the country from all those horrors, into which he firmly believes it must finally be plunged by a rejection of those measures which he has here so respectfully, and with so much anxiety, suggested for the consideration of your honourable House.

And your petitioner will ever pray.

WM. COBBETT.

Now, my friends, you, observe, compose the only part of the community,

except the mere labouring classes, about whose fate I am bound to care one single straw. I am very desirous, however, that you should be preserved amidst the turmoil which must come, unless the measures suggested in the above petition, be adopted in time. I have only to tell you here, that I have, in the above petition, exaggerated nothing. You know well that the *facts* that I have stated are true: you know that I foresaw every thing that has happened, and that I duly warned the Parliament at every stage: you know that every prediction has been fulfilled to the very letter: and, in the predictions which I have now expressed, I have only to tell you that I am perfectly sincere; that I believe in the truth of every word that I have put into this petition; that I am convinced that the consequences must ensue; that every thing that I anticipate must happen, unless prevented by measures such as those which I have suggested. I believe as firmly as I believe that the month of May will come, that all that desolation which I apprehend will take place, unless prevented by the measures which I have pointed out.

I declare this to you in this solemn manner, in order that you may be prepared; in order that you may make all the preparation in your power, against the day when events so terrible shall arrive. I beseech you not to be deluded by the apparent tranquillity and carelessness of those who ought to foresee the dangers here spoken of: I beseech you not to be deceived by this: I beseech you not to believe, that the danger does not exist, because they do not see it. They have never foreseen the danger; never foreseen any one of the mischiefs which their measures have produced; never had any apprehension until the moment when the evil stared them in the face. If they were to look well at the state of the country at this moment, they would be convinced that a great change must speedily take place; but, when you hear them say that there are more five-pound notes afloat than there were three years ago; when you hear them say, that there is more money

afloat (paper and coin taken together) than there was during the war; when you hear them say, that the retail traders are in a flourishing state; when you hear them say, that the country is in a fitter state to go to war than at any former period: when you hear them say these things, and when you open your eyes, see the number of shops shut up, and look at your numerous insolvent neighbours, can you be weak enough still to pay attention to what comes from the lips of these persons; can you be weak enough to think, that all is safe because they discover no symptoms of fear?

If any thing further were necessary to convince you of the necessity of being constantly upon your guard, and preparing yourselves for the worst, the proceedings in the House of Commons ought to be quite sufficient for that purpose. You can see that every man, even in that House, anxiously wishes that *something* should be done; and yet you must be blind indeed if you do not perceive that *nothing* will be done; or, at least, nothing that will have the smallest tendency to relieve the nation from its distress and danger. On the first day of the meeting, it was manifest that there existed, in the breasts of a majority of the members, a design to compel the Ministers to return to the small paper-money. There was, in fact, a majority quite ready for that purpose. What, then, prevented this majority from bringing forward this measure and carrying it? Why, the strange fear that the Duke; that this soldier would quit the concern, and leave the triumphant voters to carry it on themselves. This was the consideration that gave the first check to the majority. But, when there had been time to reflect a little; when the consequences of bringing in a bill to return to the small paper-money; when these consequences began to be understood; when it was seen that, before a bill could be passed for the purpose, a run upon the banks must take place, a run upon all debtors at the same time, a general panic, and a complete blowing-up of the system; when the partisans of small paper-

money perceived this, they grew cool, drew themselves off one by one, and left poor Mr. Western and Westminster's Pride, with their teacher, Locke, in the lurch; and before the end of the session, not a man will be left bold enough to open his mouth as the partisan of the small paper-money. What reliance, then, ought you to put in the notions or the motions of men who are thus situated, and who appear not to know, for two hours together, what they shall say or do with regard to any one subject?

The next step that was taken in the House of Commons, was a motion by Sir James Graham, intended to pledge the House to a revision of the salaries which had been augmented; a motion which, insignificant as it was, was set aside for one still more insignificant made by the ministry, in the following words: "Resolved, that in all the establishments of the country, whether civil or military, every saving ought to be made which may be made without a violation of existing engagements, and without detriment to the public service."

If one could possibly be in a laughing mode, at a time like the present, here would be laughter for a month, especially as Sir James Graham, at the conclusion of his speech, had called the House, "THE NOBLEST ASSEMBLY OF FREE MEN IN THE CIVILIZED WORLD,"!!! It is a noble body, to be sure; but really, Sir James Graham, being such a noble body of free men, they ought not to have a law to banish people for uttering words having a tendency to bring them into contempt. However, my friends, noblest or noblest not, here they were debating for a whole night, and at last coming to a resolution that all possible savings ought to be made that could be made, *without any reduction of the present expenditure*; for that was the real meaning of the resolution. What will Mr. Beckett Denison, of Doncaster, think of this? He called for the pruning-knife or the sponge: how he must have been disappointed, when he found that even the descendant of John with

a bright sword, had nothing to propose even beyond a puling resolution, and that he even gave up that, and suffered the ministry to supplant it by a resolution which really meant that not one farthing should be deducted.

Three years ago this same Sir James Graham published a pamphlet, to which he put his name, recommending the taking of thirty per cent from the interest of the Debt. I gave him such a strapping upon that occasion; having caught him "*out of doors*"; having caught him straying beyond the fence of "*the noblest assembly of free men in the civilized world*"; having caught him straggling out of the privileged ground, and without his protection against contempt; I strapped him, I whipped him, I cuffed him and kicked him, I bundled him and trundled him about, till, if he did not look like a hunted devil, he certainly would have made the world laugh if he had exclaimed, "*I am one of the noblest assembly of free men in the civilized world.*"

However, this drubbing appears to have done him good, for it has not only kept him out of print, but has restrained him, apparently, from any suggestion relative to our old friend, the *Debt*; our best, and, indeed, our only friend; that friend that will finally give us all that we want in spite of the workings of the flagitious ruffians who buy and sell the seats, and who thrive by the traffic. In this debate, Lord Morpeth is reported to have said, that "some honourable members advised an *equitable adjustment* with the public creditor. In his opinion, any proposal of measures of that kind, would come before them with a better grace *after every just and honourable means of relief had been exhausted*!" So say we, my friends; and we say, that this good and trusty old ally of ours, the Debt, shall not be attacked until pensions, sinecures, double salaries, double pay, have been demolished, and until a good pull has been taken from that immense mass of property commonly called *church property*. We join with Lord Morpeth here; we must have

a little patience, but two things will give us all that we want, and these two things are, first, gold payments at the Bank, according to the present standard; and second, a payment of the interest on the Debt in full tale, and in that standard gold.

Now, mind, it is utterly impossible for us not to have that which we want, if these two be rigidly adhered to. The next little amusing attempt in Parliament was a motion made by Mr. Hume, who, at the end of a speech which, if it had been put into a cannon, and fired off by the Greeks at the Turks, would have frightened the heathens a great deal more than Joseph's large and liberal subscription to the Greek loan; at the end of this tremendous speech, he made a motion as follows: "That this House will forthwith proceed to the repeal and modification of taxes to the largest possible extent that the civil, military, and naval establishments of the country will admit, as the means of affording general relief to the country." Joseph's resolution *might* have been a little more *grammatical*, but, being *Joseph's*, and being tendered to "the noblest assembly of free men in the world," who have a law to protect them against the contempt of the people, the want of a little grammar is hardly worthy of notice. The debate ended in a division, which presented sixty-nine for Joseph's motion, and a hundred and eighty-four against it, leaving the worthy Joseph in a minority of a hundred and fifteen.

If I had been in the House, I should certainly have voted against Joseph. First, on account of the absence of all distinct meaning in the words of the resolution; and next, because I look upon such a motion as leading to nothing but committees, and shufflings, and delays, and disappointments. If a man were in earnest, why not propose the abolition of a specific tax. Joseph, in the course of his very trying speech, said that there were *wild schemes* afloat about the country; but his scheme was just as wild as any that he had ever heard of; for, to adopt the reductions of which he spoke, would be just as effectual in blowing up the system as a

return to the small paper-money would be; or as any other scheme, not excepting that imputed to Mr. Maberly, of issuing exchequer bills to be made a legal tender. In short, my friends, the system is driven up into a corner: a bill to return to the small paper-money; a sweep at the taxes, like that proposed by Joseph; a repeal of the malt tax alone; any measure, no matter what, that would indicate a serious intention to diminish the amount of the revenue, would cause an instant run upon the Bank. Who would be fool enough to hold stock in the funds, if he saw the army taken away, or saw the taxes taken away, without which the army cannot exist? The whole, taxes, places, pensions, sinecures, grants, army, navy, church, law, law-offices, debt: the whole is one and the same system: these are all so many parts of one whole and entire thing, and each part is necessary to the existence of the rest. The seat-system arose with the paper-system: they are twins, or, rather, they are body and soul: they have grown up together; they have flourished together; they are now in jeopardy together; and they will die together. Many years ago I said, and I say still, that one of these systems cannot exist without the other; and that both will exist as long as they possibly can no man will doubt.

Believe not, therefore, my friends, in any thing that you hear about a design to lessen the amount of the taxes, unless you hear at the same time of a design to make a reform in the Parliament; and to believe that such reform will take place with the consent of those who have an interest in preventing it, is to believe a great deal more than any, the most credulous men upon earth, ever believed.

Be not amused by any talk about the *reducing of expenses*. Of what use is the reducing of expenses if the *taxes* all remain; and remain they must, until the time when the whole system shall go to pieces. Sir Francis Burdett, though he made a very strange speech on Mr. Hume's motion, was perfectly right, when he said that even reductions to the extent proposed by Mr. Hume

would produce no sensible effect in relieving the distresses of the country. Nothing short of those things which are prayed for in the above petition can yield any real relief to the country. I beg you to look at the state of the millions at this time, and particularly to look at the temper and conduct of the agricultural labourers. They are the *millions*, and the formidable millions too. I have always said, that they would not lie down and starve quietly. You saw, my friends, in the last Register, that the labourers of a parish in Buckinghamshire had proceeded, *armed with cudgels*, to the house of an overseer; that they had forcibly resisted the peace-officers; that they had insisted upon a certain amount of relief; that the strife had drawn together labourers from the neighbouring parishes; that the parties taken into custody were discharged by the magistrate, Lord Nugent, who ordered the relief to be given according to the men's demand, and who, by his very wise and laudable conduct, prevailed on the labourers quietly to disperse.

In a large parish of Sussex, a week or two ago, the assistant overseer, having refused to comply with the demands of the poor, they proceeded, *armed with cudgels*, to his house; dragged him from his house; carried him before a neighbouring magistrate, who not only ordered him to pay the money demanded, but who further conciliated the assailants by treating them to bread and cheese and beer. I had this account from a respectable farmer (living in the neighbourhood), on Monday morning last; and in conversation with him I observed, that the poor would collect the rates themselves. From the account in Buckinghamshire, we find that the overseer laid the fault upon the rate-payers, from whom he was unable to obtain the rates; and the Aylesbury paper stated that the magistrates had recommended that the farmer should be permitted to pay the rates in kind! In kind, gracious God! And what are the poor to do with the produce? Pay them in barley, good farmers, and I will pledge my life that

they turn it into malt *without any repeal of the malt tax!* Pay them in kind once; and they will *take* in kind the second time: there being no law to fix the quantity, they will be sure to take enough, whether in corn or in *meat*. What fold will hold a sheep, what sty will hold a pig, what stall will hold an ox, in such a state of things? Talking a little further with my Sussex friend, we both agreed that the overseers would screen themselves by saying that they could not collect the rates; that the next thing would be, that the labourers would make them give up the names of the defaulters, and go and collect the rates themselves. And that then the country would be but one remove, one small remove, from being abandoned to the law of nature; that is to say, the *law of the strongest*; and that all property, beginning with the victuals and drink, and proceeding to objects of clothing and so forth, would cease to receive the protection of the law of the land.

To-day is Wednesday, the 17th of February; and the Morning Herald of this morning brings me the following paragraph, taken from a paper published at Rochester, I believe, called the *KENT AND ESSEX HERALD*. It is a paragraph which would make a sensible ministry lose not an hour in proposing to the Parliament, not the discharging of a few custom-house clerks, but those very measures which I have been so long recommending in vain.

"A few days since, we hear, a party of labourers, 70 in number, applied to the overseers of a parish near Maidstone for their usual weekly relief. The men were informed that, in consequence of the great pressure of the rates, every shilling of money was expended, and, therefore, their solicitations could not be complied with. One and all declared that they were in a starving state, and unless relief were granted, their existence would be at an end, and demanded to know *whose rates were due*. The officers, to get quit of their importunities, informed them of *one gentleman*, and accordingly the whole proceeded to his res-

"idence, and required his presence, and then stated their object, adding, *that they had knives, and, if the money were not forthcoming, they would possess themselves of what the house afforded, and divide it.* The gentleman, however, to prevent unpleasantness, offered a check, but this they refused, adding that money would suit them best. He then dispatched his servant to Maidstone, where the check was cashed, and the money, when brought back, was equally divided.

Thus, then, we have specimens from three counties; well attested specimens of this progress, of something very nearly approaching to a dissolution of society; and this, too, observe, before the One-pound Note Bill has been in full operation above four or five months. From going thus to collect the poor rates in particular instances, the suffering parties will proceed to the general collection; and, from this general collection, how short is the step to a general taking of just what they please from anybody. And, while this is going on, Mr. Slaney is, as the newspapers tell us, coming on with his Poor-law Bill, the tendency of which was to narrow, in some way or other, the granting of relief. I wish to God (though it is begging very hard for custom) Mr. Slaney would lay out a shilling upon my little book called the POOR MAN'S FRIEND, in the three middle numbers of which he will find all the principles and all the law, canon law, public law, common law, and statute law, relating to the rights of the poor; and if that book do not convince him, that he ought to touch this subject with a very tender hand, particularly at the present time, conviction is not to be produced in his mind.

Now, my friends, readers of the Register, observe, that the above petition was written before I had heard of this case in Kent. I wanted no such instance to convince me, that the like must be the case in a very short time; because I know the country people well; and I know that they will not lie down and starve quietly, and God Almighty forbid that they should. When men are as-

sembled in great masses, as in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, they are more easily managed. The knowledge that there are a few soldiers in the neighbourhood, keeps them quiet under the most poignant of sufferings: it is, in fact, a numerous flock of sheep, kept in awe by the most trifling of means. It is not thus with the country people. The manufacturers, thousands upon thousands, talk well, think well, are sprightly and full of intelligence; but they live in crowds, their hands and their skins are soft; they live before good fires, and are contented in a state of unwholesome warmth. The country people, less intelligent, and less talkative, are accustomed to all that hardens man: their hands are hard as sticks; they bear cold like cattle; they live detached in lanes or amongst woods; they are accustomed to move about in the dark, and are not easily frightened at the approach of danger; they have been used to eat meat, they are thoughtful, and are rendered resolute by suffering. Each man lives near about where his grandfather lived; every one hears of the change that has taken place; and, above all things, every man and woman and child old enough to understand any thing, looks upon his parish as being partly his; and a sufficiency of food and raiment he looks upon as his inheritance. Never, let what will happen, will these people lie down and starve quietly. I assured my hearers that this would be the case at every place where I delivered a lecture in the North; and I used to tell the poor creatures at Preston, that they would not get a Sussex labourer to live in the manner that they lived, unless they first broke every limb in his body.

It is curious enough, that, in the same *Morning Herald* from which I take the above paragraph, I found the following, taken from the MANCHESTER COURIER, giving an account of the state of the poor in the neighbourhood of that town.

"It appeared that Mr. Potter visited, at Irlam, 68 families, consisting of 352 individuals, whose united income (including parish relief) amounted only to 33*l.* 0*s.* 6*d.* per

“ week ; being 1s. 10½d. for each ! The
 “ total amount of parish relief received
 “ by these 352 individuals was 1l. 0s. 9d. !
 “ In Broom-house-lane, Mr. Potter
 “ visited 37 families, consisting of 187
 “ individuals, whose total income (in-
 “ cluding parish relief) amounted to
 “ 16l. 7s., or 1s. 9d. each per week !
 “ *The parish relief received by these*
 “ *individuals, was only 17s. 6d. !* Mr.
 “ Potter also informed the meeting that
 “ he made his visits generally about
 “ the time the people were preparing
 “ dinner ; and that among the 105 fa-
 “ milies which he visited, he found only
 “ four cooking any portion of butcher’s
 “ meat ; and these four were only pre-
 “ paring a few pieces of bacon. The
 “ remaining 101 families were unable
 “ to afford even that humble luxury,
 “ and had to subsist only on potatoes
 “ and salt.”

This Mr. Potter is, as I was informed at Manchester, one of the most benevolent men, and most active in his exertions that ever lived in this world. Pray, attend to the pittance which was afforded by the means of parish relief ; and think of this gross defiance of the law. The law is the same in Lancashire as it is in Sussex and in Kent. The law says, that no human being shall suffer from want ; and how dare the administrators of the law to permit such suffering while there is one single man in their district who possesses money or money’s worth things, beyond his own immediate necessities ?

In the end, if this state of things were to go on increasing the suffering, whole flocks of people would migrate from the barren districts, and come into the countries where the food is to be obtained : the law of settlement becomes a reed, a mere rush, when men go for relief with cudgels in their hands. This is the serious part of the prospect. All the rest might be looked at with some degree of indifference ; but this matter cannot be blinked : it is not to be overcome by votes or by any other means than that of real and substantial and general relief ; and that is to be afforded by no means other than that of a great, and

very great, diminution in the amount of the taxes.

The farmers and the country tradesmen and shopkeepers will, in great part, soon be unable to pay the rates, which rates are not all for the poor, observe ; and it is probable, and even certain, that great numbers of them will very soon side with the discontented poor, and will begin to think about living *rent-free*. The pressure will then fall upon the landlords ; and this indeed, is the natural course of events. There is not the means in the country to pay sixty millions of taxes, seven or eight millions of rates, and to pay rents besides. Landlords will find, that it is useless for them to sell up tenants ; finding that, they will endeavour to find new tenants ; but will fail. Thus the whole will be swallowed up by the poor and by the Government, and the poor must be well kept in order to keep them quiet. When taxes begin and grow heavy, they descend with augmented weight from class to class, till at last they press the labourer down to the earth. When they become insupportable, the working class shakes off the load by flying at the farmer for subsistence, and they demand back, in the shape of relief, that which they have paid in taxes. If the law be of sufficient force to restrain them, they continue to suffer ; but when that force is insufficient, they suffer no longer. The farmers and tradesmen, thus pressed by the poor, fly at the landlord, and refuse him rent. The landlords, if unchecked by any undue influence of superior power, fly at the Government, and make it desist from its oppressive demands. But, here they find a bar in the fillers of the seats ; for these have their best estate in the taxes ; and thus those landlords, who have no estate in the taxes, and who are the greater number, become totally powerless ; and their estates may pretty nearly be taken from them at once ; for an estate without rent, is, in fact, no estate at all. And I am perfectly serious when I say, that I should not at all wonder, if great numbers of these landlords, with their families, were to sink down into abject poverty,

and have, all the while, apparently, estates in their possession. The poor *will* be fed. The farmers will, in time, join the poor; and the landlords, such as have no share of the taxes, will gradually sink into poverty, unless the thing go to pieces in a convulsion. As to those whose estates are mortgaged deeply, they will speedily possess nothing; they can pay no interest on their mortgages; their estates will be taken away; they will shift about for awhile from friend to friend; but at last, they will become paupers themselves, which has already been the case in not a few instances.

Now, in conclusion, let me beseech you, my friends, to think well of all these things. This march of events, which is absolutely inevitable, admonishes you to be continually on the watch; to be prudent, to waste nothing, to make no sacrifice to show, to abstain from all unnecessary expenditure; to consider of what value a single sovereign may become, to owe no debts, and to have no debts owed to you if possible: above all things, to get possession of **SOME GOLD**, and to keep it.

WM. COBBETT.

TO
THE FARMERS AND TRADERS
OF THE
COUNTY OF SURREY.

Barnes, 15th Feb., 1830.

GENTLEMEN,

UNDERSTANDING that there is soon to be held a meeting of our county, I take the liberty to offer you my advice with regard to one part of our conduct on this important occasion. We may be assured, that there will be no real redress of our manifold grievances, unless we obtain a radical reform of the Commons' House of Parliament. Therefore, it appears to me, that we ought, as far as we possibly can, to take our labourers with us to the meeting, and there let them learn, that it is not **WE** who are the cause of their sufferings: that we

are fellow-sufferers along with them; that our cause is their cause; and that we must all be relieved, or all continue to suffer, together. For my own part, I shall take with me every man and every boy in my husbandry service; and I do hope that the greater part of you will do the same.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient,

and most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

COBBETT-LECTURES.

As it is likely that there will be a county meeting in Surrey, in the course of ten days, and as it is my bounden duty to attend that meeting if I possibly can, this is to apprise my friends at Norwich and Bury St. Edmond's, and also my friends at Eye, that I shall suspend my journey to the East until after that meeting. Before the publication of the next Register, I shall probably be able to ascertain the precise time of my departure from London: until then the time must remain unfixed; for Surrey is my native county, and I perceive that my native town of Farnham has at last sent a petition to Parliament complaining of its state of distress. It is too far for many persons to come from that place to Epsom; but let the whole town petition, rich and poor, for a repeal of the malt tax. Let them give me notice of the time of their holding a meeting for such a purpose, and I will attend at that meeting, and put my hand, amongst others, to such petition. Of one thing, however, they may rest assured; and that is, that they will never again see the face of prosperity until they see a reform of the Commons House of Parliament. Let the rich be convinced, that the poor will never lie down and starve quietly; let them be convinced, that as I told the hop planters once at Andover, the rich and the poor have one common cause; and that, to obtain relief, they must cordially co-operate together: let those who pay poor-rates be ashamed to complain of the six millions a year

to the poor, who do their work for them, while they complain not of the sixty millions a year which they pay to the Government.

WM. COBBETT.

NORFOLK COUNTY MEETING.

(Continued from page 160.)

STILL, however, while any duty on the article remained, the farmer was unable to make use of it; for there were so many restrictions connected with it; so many accounts were to be kept, of how much for the bullocks, how much for the sheep, and how much in store, that a man who employed it, always ran the risk of getting into the Exchequer through it; but when the tax was entirely taken off he began to use salt, and had continued to do so successfully to that day. (Applause.)

There was another matter which required attention, with respect to the malt tax. He hoped that there were some gentlemen present connected with the malting business, for to them he would appeal, whether, if the duty were taken off, the malt would be not only much cheaper but also of a much better quality? He would ask any one who knew the business, whether, if the harvest was as favourable as could be wished, if there was not a drop of rain to spoil the in-gathering, the malt returned from that barley would not vary much as to quality? Surely, then, if the barley was so different, it must require a different treatment when being made into malt; but this, under the present provision, the maltster was not allowed to give it. From all these respective circumstances, he was prepared to contend, that if the duty were taken away, it would have the best possible effect for the community at large. In answer to one part of his statement, it might, perhaps, be said, that as the poor had no brewing utensils, they could not brew their own beer; this, however, he thought entitled to very little weight, for he himself had known many who, when they could get the barley, were always able to brew it into beer. As

he had already observed, he trusted that the meeting would confine itself to the immediate subjects now before it; though he had seen in a Norwich Paper an intimation that the game laws would be touched upon; if there were to be such a requisition, he would be one of the first to put his name to it (cheers); and if the meeting, in any respect, went beyond the consideration of the malt tax, he would move for the game laws being the subject. (Cries of "No, no!")

Mr. WODEHOUSE, M.P. for the county, then presented himself to the meeting, and was received with applause mingled with a few hisses. The Honourable Gentleman began by observing, that on all former occasions it had been his uniform practice to wait almost till the last moment, and till every one had declared his opinion. There were, however, particular circumstances which induced him to press himself on their attention thus early; and he should feel obliged if they would allow him to take that opportunity of expressing his sentiments. (Applause.) In what he had to say, he would begin by alluding to some circumstances which had taken place in the course of the last session of Parliament, and also to others which were to be brought forward in the course of the next session. He was anxious that his constituents should, one and all, thus early be made aware of the sentiments by which his mind would be governed. Every one who heard him, was aware that he had not suffered a year to pass, in which he had refrained from pressing on the attention of Government (whoever might form its members) the evils arising from the malt tax (applause); but with that conviction pressing on his mind, he must be allowed to go at once into a short statement of the points on which he agreed, and of those on which he disagreed with the resolutions which had been proposed to the meeting by Mr. Bulwer. The first, second, third, and fourth resolutions were all of them of a general nature; for they all applied to the general influence of taxation on the country. These four, therefore, were in their spirit, and in every syllable of

them, undeniably true ; but they would be so good as to recollect that the fifth and sixth resolutions applied to one article only. And what was that article ? Malt ! But then, why not also the article of beer ? (Applause and uproar.) Why was not the tax on tea specified, or that on sugar, and still more that on coals ? (Cries of "Bravo !" and confusion.) If he were asked why he wanted to include those also, his answer was, that the high rates of these taxes must necessarily press upon the people, now that they were labouring under the difficulty of low wages. (Cheers.) It was evident, therefore, that by this high rate of taxation the comforts of the lower classes were abridged ; and while things remained in this state, it was a scandal to the aristocracy of the country. (Cheers.) The seventh resolution was of a different nature again, for it applied to the vexatious restrictions that the malt trade experienced. At his request the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the course of the last session, acceded to a proposal for examining into the affair, according to a suggestion that was transmitted to him by his friend Mr. Crisp Brown, and procured the appointment of three experienced excisemen and three experienced maltsters, as a sort of commission of inquiry, in order that it might be ascertained whether these vexatious restrictions were necessary or unnecessary, in order that those only which were necessary might be retained. What was the result of this commission ? He himself not being able to attend, his friend Mr. Portman attended for him, and the conclusion arrived at was, that the maltsters were perfectly satisfied with the conduct of the Government. (Hear.) It had been observed by Mr. Postle, that he wished the malt tax to be extinguished altogether, as otherwise the same army of excisemen would be kept up for its collection. But let them look at the other high taxes, the enormous one upon spirits, in particular, and they would see that there was little hope, while that continued, for the decrease of the number of excisemen ; in short, while there was a high duty there must

necessarily be a high penalty, and the argument therefore applied generally to all exciseable commodities. (Hear, hear.) There was one material subject connected with this and every other tax, which the meeting was bound to take into consideration. He had, for a long time (and was never more impressed with it than now) been of opinion that it was mere childishness, and both nugatory and delusive, to enter into a consideration of the present state of the country, either as compared with what it had been in past time, or with what it would probably be in future, without constantly bearing in mind its relation to the overwhelming and paramount question of the altered value of money. (Applause.) In his opinion the legislature, when they meddled with that question, had no adequate conception of the importance of the work they were taking in hand. (Hear, hear.) He knew that he held this opinion in opposition to the noble Duke at the head of his Majesty's Government ; and he deplored the circumstance ; but he also knew that he had a duty to discharge to his country, and he was resolved to execute it fearlessly. (Applause.) The time was now come when public men of all kinds must not pride themselves on being able to talk about their consistency, for, to all that wished that, he would recommend them to borrow a leaf from Lord Grenville, where he said that it was far more for the benefit of the country for a man to be led to the ready abandonment of a preconceived error (cheers) ; and by an undisguised avowal of such alteration, he best evinced his sense of his public duty. (Cheers.) As allusions had been made by the speakers who preceded him, to the probability of something like a property tax being introduced, perhaps the meeting would allow him to read an extract from a work, written by no ordinary man, living in no ordinary times ; it was a passage from Hampden's *Considerations respecting the most proper way of raising Money*, and was to the following effect :—

"That a great parliament-man had undertook to make it out, that granting to King Charles a moiety of excise in

lieu of the wardships, was equivalent to giving away the whole of the barley land of England. Alluding to the excise; when the serpent once gets his head into a hole, it is no hard matter for him to draw his whole body after it. If an excise should be laid on malt, where will the burden lie? It is evident that this tax will fall very hard upon the poor farmers; and those who are best able to pay it will be most spared. The price of it will certainly sink in the country for want of consumption, by reason of the new imposition. There will, doubtless, be many proposals; but when all is done, I humbly conceive there will be nothing upon the whole matter found so safe and so much for the good of the nation, as a land-tax. Other things may help, but this will be the main resource; it is true this will smart whilst it lasts, but then we are sure to have an end of it. The members of Parliament themselves will be obliged, in interest, to take it off when the occasion ceases; and besides, the freeholders of England will never endure the continuance of a land tax longer than there is an evident necessity for it.

"This is the way in which our ancestors acted upon these occasions, and this is the safe and sure way. It has been laid down as a good rule in Parliament, to support the Government in time of peace, by taxes upon trade, and in time of war to have recourse to the land, because that tax will not be in danger of being continued when the war is over."

This was the way that our ancestors had proposed to step in, and certainly it was the only sure way on which to proceed (hear, hear); as he looked at the question, it was a good rule for Parliament to tax trade in the time of war, and in the time of peace to alter the tax to land; and he believed that if the Parliament of 1815 had not been actuated by the greatest selfishness, there would then have been a rate levied upon property (applause); he did not by this mean an inquisitorial sort of tax, but a general duty upon land, houses, and personal property, to a certain extent. If this course were now adopted, he had no doubt that it would enable

the Duke of Wellington and the Government to persevere in the course already commenced, and God grant that he might go on rejoicing, and so sink down to a happy rest; and he was sure that if the plan had been earlier adopted, there was not one impost which the people had to pay, that would not have been lighter than at present. (Hear.) He, however, said that gentlemen appeared to be seized with a sort of shivering fit at all notion of a property tax; and he should therefore content himself with reading some resolutions, which he had drawn up, for the sake of recording what his sentiments were, and that he might stand before them clear. (Hear.) The following were the resolutions:—

"That the state of depression in which every interest throughout the empire is placed, demands the most serious attention of the legislature.

"That one great and primary object for consideration is, the extent to which the comforts of the poor and industrious classes of the people are abridged by the continuance of a high rate of taxation under a low rate of wages, as applied to the necessities of life, such as malt, beer, tea, sugar, and coals.

"That with respect to the real weight of taxation, the legislature does not appear to have entertained an adequate conception of the effects that were likely to be produced by the partial restoration of the present standard of gold, even as far as regards England; Scotland and Ireland being hitherto exempted from its operation.

"That the evils of an unlimited paper currency, are such as no right-minded person should ever seek to renew; but that every practicable suggestion for alleviating the evils of a too contracted currency, ought to be calmly and steadily pursued, with a due regard both to the safety of the state, and the general welfare of the community."

LORD SUFFIELD wished to know whether Mr. Wodehouse intended to move these resolutions by way of amendment? If he did, his Lordship would be happy to second them.

MR. WODEHOUSE: If your Lordship will move them, I will second them.

LORD SUFFIELD: He had not come there with an intention of offering any observations on the object of the meeting; that object he generally approved, and his mind was not made up to express any opinion on the language of the petition. The meeting might see by where he had placed himself (his Lordship was in the gallery over the main body of the meeting), that he had come unprepared to make any observations; but he had been so forcibly struck by the arguments of Mr. Wodehouse, and they were so precisely in accordance with his own sentiments, that he could not forbear affording the great and respectable meeting which he saw before him, an opportunity, by seconding Mr. Wodehouse's amendment, of passing their judgment on the subject. (Applause.) God forbid that he should attempt to throw down the apple of discord among them! That was no more his wish than it was Mr. Wodehouse's; but he had been encouraged to declare that his opinions were consentaneous with those of Mr. Wodehouse, by the warm reception which the meeting had given to that Hon. Gentleman's observations (Hear, hear); and he therefore considered that it would be matter for future regret if the meeting was not afforded an opportunity of adopting so reasonable a proposition. Having said thus much, he would not add anything further, as it could only have the effect of weakening the hon. Gentleman's arguments; and he should therefore agree to abide by Mr. Wodehouse's determination of whether he would propose an amendment or not.

SIR THOMAS BEEVOR said, that in rising to offer any opposition to Mr. Bulwer's resolutions, he did so with considerable diffidence, not only on account of the respectability of the requisitionists in whose name that Gentleman had offered his resolutions, but because he felt his own inability to do justice to the opinions which he had to express, and feared that he should not be supported by many of those who had formerly been in the habit of agreeing with him. When, however, he looked round that hall, and saw the respectable body

of freeholders that surrounded him, and recollected that seven years ago, in the very teeth of the aristocracy, they had voted for an equitable adjustment, it gave him some little confidence. (Hear, hear.) The mover and seconder had appeared extremely anxious that all who succeeded them should stick to the question of the malt tax alone, as the law had been laid down by the sixty individuals whom they represented. But though these gentlemen had taken this trouble on themselves, he did not know why the rest of the meeting were bound to adhere to their rule. If they were to touch at all upon the state of the country, it would be impossible to adhere to the malt tax only (applause); though he begged to say, that as far as Mr. Wodehouse had gone, he agreed with him entirely in sentiment; and he was happy to state, that if that Honourable Gentleman had not preceded him, he should have moved some resolutions to the same effect, only his would have gone a little beyond. (A laugh and applause.) His resolutions went to what he held to be the sole remedy for the defects of which they were complaining. He considered that those who petitioned only for the repeal of the malt tax (and Mr. Bulwer's resolutions went to nothing else) were too sanguine as to the consequences they deemed likely to attend such remission. (Applause.) The effect for which they were looking would never be produced till they had a thorough and radical reform in the Commons House of Parliament. (Continued cheers.) He had no wish to offer himself as the opponent of Mr. Wodehouse's amendment; but if that were not carried, he wished to be understood as saving to himself the right of proposing his own. Some people contended that this was not the proper time to petition Parliament; and in touching upon this he supposed that he was getting upon tender ground; however, he could not help it. Those who argued thus were full of the notion that the Duke of Wellington had some grand measure in his head, which he was to produce at the opening of the session; and this conclusion was drawn, because, as they

said, he had in the last two sessions introduced two grand constitutional measures. But even if this fact were correct, he dissented from the conclusion drawn from it, for he maintained that it was the duty of the people to give all the encouragement in their power to a good minister; and if they had a bad one, to make their voice tingle in his ears. (Cheers.) But what were these two grand constitutional measures? He supposed that the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act was one. Now he was a Dissenter, but he must confess that he was never particularly anxious for that repeal; its existence, however, had always been a matter of great objection to the Dissenters generally, and as such he had always wished for the repeal. But how did the law now stand? For his own part, he felt himself as fully excluded as ever from holding any office, if such had been his ambition: in lieu of a qualification they had a declaration which went the length of making the Dissenter state that he would not use his power to alter or attack the church.

Colonel HARVEY spoke to order: He thought that Sir Thomas was travelling quite away from the object of the meeting.

Sir THOMAS BEEVOR: What advantage then had the Dissenters gained?

The High Sheriff thought that he (Sir Thomas Beevor) was out of order.

Sir THOMAS BEEVOR could not agree with the High Sheriff; for if that Gentleman would have waited a little, he would have seen that he had not introduced the topics in reference to the Test and Corporation Acts themselves, but only for the sake of inquiring what might be expected from the Duke of Wellington in the ensuing session of Parliament. (Hear.) The other grand constitutional measure was that of Catholic emancipation; a question that excited more ill-blood than any question that had ever been brought before Parliament. But now that it was settled and over, let them calmly consider what it amounted to. The only remarkable features that he could see in it, were, the chance that it afforded to half-a-

dozen Catholic gentlemen of getting into Parliament; and to half-a-dozen Catholic barristers of getting silk gowns to their backs; while, to purchase this valuable chance, the disfranchisement of half a million of Irishmen had been accomplished! Hear that, ye Parliamentary reformers! (Cries of "Question, question!" and uproar.) And why had this disfranchisement taken place? Not because, as was alleged, they were driven in herds to the poll; but because the landlords had found out that they were no longer so to be driven. And was this, then, the man for whose measures they were to wait before they petitioned?

(To be concluded.)

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